

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USCINCEUR VAININGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 3018

EXDIS

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, MASS, AG, MO, US, MR
SUBJECT: SAHARA: MOROCCAN ARMS REQUEST

REF: STATE 221249

1. SUMMARY. WE BELIEVE IT MOST LIKELY THAT ALGERIANS WOULD NOT REACT TO OUR SUPPLYING MOROCCANS MOST OF ITEMS IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE REQUEST OUTLINED REFTEL. THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER, THAT RELATIONS COULD BE REDUCED TO WHAT THEY WERE THREE YEARS AGO. GIVEN U.S. OBJECTIVES OF MAINTAINING TRADITIONAL MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCO AND OF PRESERVING ALGERIAN PERCEPTION THAT OUR NEUTRALITY IN CONFLICT IS GENUINE, WE BELIEVE OUR MILITARY AID TO MOROCCANS SHOULD BE AIMED AT MEETING MOROCCAN DEFENSIVE NEEDS AND NOT AT ENHANCING THEIR ABILITY TO CONDUCT OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN THE SAHARA. END SUMMARY

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2. AFTER GIVING MATTER CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT, WE SUBMIT FOLLOWING LIST OF POSSIBLE ALGERIAN REACTIONS TO FAVORABLE U.S. RESPONSE TO MOROCCAN REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE SET FORTH IN STATE 221249.

3. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS: AT OUTSET, WE SHOULD NOT TWO ELEMENTS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO UR POLICY. FIRST,

MAINTAINING AN ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCO IS A NECESSITY GIVEN BOTH TRADITIONALLY CLOSE U.S. MOROCCAN RELATIONS AND HIGH LEVEL OF SOVIET MILITARY SUPPLY TO ALGERIA. TO REDUCE OR END THIS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP ABRUPTLY WOULD BE TO END OUR NEUTRALITY ON QUESTION. SECOND, U.S. HAS FINALLY SUCCEEDED IN PERSUADING ALGERIANS THAT AMERICAN NEUTRALITY IN SAHARA CONFLICT IS GENUINE AND THAT WE ARE NOT OUT TO GET THEM AND THEIR REVOLUTION. THIS IS BIG CHANGE FROM IMMEDIATE POST-GREEN MARCH PERIOD. GIVEN PRESENT STALEMATE IN SAHARA, CONTINUING NEUTRALITY SEEMS TO US TO BE THE COURSE OF ACTION BEST SUITED TO PROTECT OUR INTERESTS.

4. TO MAINTAIN THESE ELEMENTS, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCO SHOULD FOCUS ON THE BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE OF A NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCE. ALGERIANS CONTINUE TO LET IT BE KNOWN THAT THEY UNDERSTAND SUCH A RELATIONSHIP AND ARE PREPARED TO LIVE WITH IT. THEIR ATTITUDE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BECOME LESS BENIGN IF MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA BEGAN TO PREVAIL IN WAR, BUT FOR MOMENT REGIME HERE SEEMS PREPARED TO ACCEPT WHAT WE ARE DOING.

5. POSSIBLE ALGERIAN REACTIONS TO PROPOSED SALE: WE SEE TWO POSSIBLE ALGERIAN REACTIONS TO SALE:

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A. NO REACTION. ALGERIANS HAVE ALREADY INDICATED TO US THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF UR ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCO AND OF PROBABILITY OF ITS CONTINUATION. GIVEN APPARENTLY HIGH ALGERIAN INTEREST IN DEVELOPING NORMAL, ACROSS THE BOARD RELATIONSHIP WITH U.S., OUR GUESS IS THAT, IF ANTI-GUERRILLA TRAINING REQUEST NOT GRANTED, US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS WILL CONTINUE ON PRESENT COURSE.

B. COOLING OF RELATIONS. SECOND POSSIBLE REACTION IS THAT ALGERIANS WILL ONCE MORE DECIDE THAT WE ARE OUT TO GET THEM AND WILL REDUCE OUR RELATIONSHIP TO WHAT IT WAS BETWEEN RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS AND LATE 1976. THIS COULD MEAN ABANDONMENT OR CURTAILMENT OF PROPOSED COOPERATION, PARTICULARLY IN CULTURAL FIELD; POSSIBLE CURBS ON GROWTH OF US-ALGERIAN RELATIONSHIP IN BUSINESS FIELD; DETERIORATION OF RELATIVELY POOR CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH AMERICAN COMPANIES ALREADY OPERATE HERE; AND SHARP RESTRICTION IN OUR ACCESS TO HIGH LEVELS OF GOA.

6. CONSEQUENCES: THERE WOULD, OF COURSE, BE FEW CONSEQUENCES TO US-ALGERIAN RELATIONSHIP SHOULD ALGERIANS NOT REACT TO SALE. HOWEVER, SAHRAOUI "CAUSE", AS PLEADED

BY ALGERIANS HERE AND POLISARIO SPOKESMEN IN U.S. AND ELSEWHERE, SEEMS TO BE GAINING SOME RECOGNITION. THIS SALE, WHICH SEEMS MORE TAILORED THAN ITS PREDECESSORS TO COMBATTING POLISARIO, COULD THEREFOR AROUSE OPPOSITION IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES IN U.S. ALSO, SHOULD MOROCCANS ULTIMATELY BE UNABLE TO PUT DOWN POLISARIO INSURGENCY, WE WOULD BE PERCEIVED TO HAVE BACKED AN UNPOPULAR, ANTI-NATIONALIST AND LOSING CAUSE.

7. TWO ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES TO COOLING OF US-ALGERIAN RELATIONSHIP SUGGEST THEMSELVES:

A. INCREASE IN LIKELIHOOD OF ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN WAR:
MOROCCANS MAY BE PRESUMED LIKELY TO PROSECUTE SAHARA
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WAR MORE VIGOROUSLY ONCE NEW ARMS HAVE BEEN SUPPLIED, AND ALGERIANS, PERCEIVING THEIR REVOLUTION "BESEIGED" ONCE MORE BY WESTERN IDEOLOGICAL OPPONENTS SUCH AS U.S. AND FRANCE, WILL BE SPOILING FOR A FIGHT. RISK OF SUCH A CLASH CONTRIBUTING TO EAST-WEST IDEOLOGICAL POLARIZATION ARE EVIDENT.

B. DETERIORATION OF US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS: WHILE OUR RECENTLY IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS COUNTRY HAS NOT DONE MUCH TO MODERATE ALGERIAN HOSTILITY TO MOST OF OUR POLITICAL AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POSITIONS, A RETURN TO THE HANDS-OFF RELATIONSHIP OF 1974-76 WOULD CERTAINLY INTENSIFY THAT HOSTILITY.

8. RECOMMENDATION: TO SUM UP, WE BELIEVE CONTINUATION OF ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCO ON MORE OR LESS SAME BASIS AS IN RECENT PAST UNLIKELY TO DAMAGE OUR RELATIONSHIP HERE. THERE ARE, OF COURSE RISKS, AND ONE OF PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN TO FLAG THEM.

9. ON THE LIST IN STATE 221249, HOWEVER, THERE ARE ITEMS WHICH STRIKE US AS NOT DESIGNED TO BUILD MOROCCO'S DEFENSIVE CAPACITIES OVERALL, BUT RATHER TO ENHANCE ITS ABILITY TO WAGE ANTI-GUERRILLA WARFARE AGAINST POLISARIO. ANTI-GUERRILLA WARFARE INSTRUCTORS ARE MOST OBVIOUS EXAMPLE BUT OTHER ITEMS SUCH AS COBRA HELICOPTERS ALSO SEEM TO FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY. PROVISION OF THESE ITEMS TO MOROCCANS WOULD BE LIKELY TO REKINDLE ALGERIAN SUSPICIONS CONCERNING OUR NEUTRALITY AND COULD PROVOKE THE COOLING IN US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS WHOSE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES ARE SPELLED OUT ABOVE. THEY ARE ALSO THE SORT OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE LIKELY TO ATTRACT UNFAVORABLE ATTENTION WITHIN THE U.S.
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10. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT WE NOT MEET THE REQUEST
FOR INSTRUCTORS AND THAT WE STRIVE TO KEEP OUR MILITARY
SUPPLY EFFORT AIMED AT MOROCCO'S DEFENSIVE NEEDS AND NOT
AT THE SAHARA WAR.HAYNES

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